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C O N F I D E N T I A L UNVIE VIENNA 000319

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TAGS: AORC PREL KNNP IAEA SP JA SI SF BE
SUBJECT: IAEA/DG RACE: AMANO ACCLAIMED DIRECTOR GENERAL

REF: UNVIE 318 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: CDA Geoffrey R. Pyatt for reasons 1.4 b and d

Summary

¶1. (C) With resounding and sustained applause, the Board of Governors appointed Japanese Ambassador Yukiya Amano as the IAEA Director General-designate July 3 by acclamation. More than three dozen statements of congratulations, including on the part of the G-77, NAM, EU, all regional groups, and 11 non-Board members who took the floor under Rule 50, demonstrated unified support for Amano. IAEA Member States (including former opponents) put aside the long and divisive electoral campaign and rallied behind the next Director General. Pending pro-forma approval by the September 14-19 General Conference, which we fully expect will endorse the result by consensus, Amano will begin his four-year term as Director General on December 1, 2009, succeeding ElBaradei as only the fifth Director General since the inception of the IAEA in 1957, and the first Asian to fulfill this role. This is an important victory for the U.S. in strengthening our imprint on the Agency and positioning us for the challenges likely ahead. End Summary.

Uniting Behind Amano

¶2. (C) Opening the "Appointment Stage" of the selection process for the office of Director General, IAEA Board of Governors Chairwoman Taos Feroukhi (Algeria) set the tone by recalling the Board's tradition and desire to appoint the Director General by acclamation. She commented on the end of a "long and laborious" process, and paid tribute to all the candidates who had put themselves forward in this "fire and water" election. Feroukhi noted that the symbolic force of continuing the Board's tradition of acclamation would ensure the next Director General the support of all Member States. The G-77, NAM and Africa group followed suit with congratulatory messages asking that Amano take due account of the aspirations of the developing world and the promotional role of the Agency (i.e. technical cooperation); several NAM members such as Cuba, South Africa and Venezuela (Rule 50) also enjoined Amano to maintain the "impartiality and professionalism" exhibited by ElBaradei. Russia and China congratulated Amano and joined others in expressing gratitude for outgoing DG ElBaradei's leadership. Russia hoped the

IAEA would remain an authoritative and independent international body under Amano's leadership, while China called on Amano to unite all Member States, taking account of their legitimate concerns. (Comment: Feroukhi's positive role in engineering this smooth approval process was especially important. At an UNVIE reception the night before, rumors surfaced of a possible blocking move by Cuba. After our approach to her, Feroukhi moved quickly to ensure that all went smoothly. End comment.)

¶3. (SBU) Statements by Amano's supporters were universally effusive (as were many who had supported other candidates). Almost every Board statement paid tribute to Amano's main opponent, South African candidate Abdul Minty. Taking the floor for South Africa, Minty delivered a dignified concession speech, expressing gratitude for all those who supported him while calling on everyone to now set aside their differences. South Africa pledged to work with Amano as Director General in the "cooperative spirit that unites us." Speaking in a national capacity (in addition to the EU statement), Spain also offered "warm congratulations to Amano" and invited others to set aside differences in support of the next DG. While noting that it was "no secret" that it had supported Minty, Brazil underscored full confidence in Amano. Even Cuba joined the chorus of voices pledging "full support." India delivered a genuinely warm congratulatory statement which expressed confidence in Amano's "soft-touch profile, prone to listening more than speaking." Malaysia, the Philippines and Mongolia (speaking on behalf of the Far East Group) hailed the election of the first Director General from Asia.

¶4. (SBU) In addition to Board members and regional groups, eleven countries volunteered congratulatory statements under Rule 50: Morocco, Jordan, the ROK, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Bolivia, Colombia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Venezuela and Iran.

A Couple of Tepid Spoilers

¶5. (SBU) Egypt and Iran were the only ones to highlight divisions in the Board of Governors in their congratulatory messages. While it called on everyone to assemble behind the next Director General, Egypt stressed major challenges in overcoming deep divisions among Member States promoted by the "narrow interests of some." Egypt also lamented that the Middle East was the only region "consistently scrutinized in a selective manner." Jordan called for a Middle East NWFZ while Lebanon added that countries in the region "live in fear of a nuclear arsenal of a state that flouts all conventions." Morocco noted the need for "balance" in addressing controversial cases before the IAEA.

¶6. (SBU) Iran cited the "worrisome polarization" among Member States, North and South, East and West. Ambassador Soltanieh referred to more than 100 Member States not on the Board being excluded from the decision on appointment of the Director General, though he acknowledged that the General Conference authorizes the decision "as a formality." Stopping short of demanding more than pro-forma GC approval, Iran called for consideration in the informal Future of the Agency deliberations of "possible legal measures" sometime in the future. In the end, Iran assured full cooperation with Amano and joined others in saying it was time to set aside differences. (Comment: Iran's half-hearted snarkiness fell flat, with no impact on the congratulatory mood of the Board.

The international press huddled around Amano ignored Soltanieh, who was loitering in the press area afterward as usual. End comment.)

Amano Appointed Director General

¶7. (SBU) At the end of the statements, the Board Chair called for suspension of the Rules to allow for Amano's appointment by acclamation. Before she could finish her sentence, the Board room exploded in loud and sustained applause for

several minutes. In a short acceptance speech, a visibly moved Amano noted his campaign's efforts to secure support across all regions and pledged to execute his responsibilities as DG impartially and without bias, taking account of all Member States. In addition to nonproliferation, he cited management of the IAEA as a priority and highlighted the Agency's staff as its most valuable and indispensable asset. Amano concluded by expressing gratitude to outgoing DG ElBaradei and to all who campaigned for Director General, especially Minty, and looked forward to working toward common goals for the IAEA.

Imperative to Reach Out

¶8. (SBU) Comment: This success for Japan and Amano personally is seen here also by both our friends and rivals as a victory for the U.S. in strengthening our imprint on the IAEA. Septel addresses the leadership (senior personnel) issues that confront the next DG and those states, including ourselves, who want to see him succeed. Apart from advancing the right people, Amano also has to work from the very start both to deepen and highlight the practical stake of emerging powers whose sway in the nuclear agency is even greater proportionally than on the world stage at large -- Brazil, India, Argentina, South Africa, Egypt, Pakistan, Mexico. The genuinely positive sentiments that Amano's election elicited from Brazil and India will be especially important in this regard. Our dialogue with the new DG will emphasize the role of these states as well as those of Russia and China, alongside those of the like-minded group in which the U.S. and Japan have cooperated in this selection process. End Comment.

PYATT